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Nature Notes:

THE

Selborne Society's Magazine

VOL. I.

EDITED BY

THE REV. PERCY MYLES, B.A., F.L.S.

AND

JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S.

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No. 1. JANUARY, 1890.

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THE SELBORNE SOCIETY'S MAGAZINE

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Nature Notes,

The Selborne Society's Magazine.

No. 1. JANUARY, 1890. Vol. I.

OUR PROGRAMME.

BY THE EDITORS.

NATURE NOTES, the Selborne Society's Magazine, is intended to be a record of progress—progress in the love of Nature, in the knowledge of natural objects, and in the war to be waged in defence of the beauties of Nature against their more or less avowed exterminators.

One main object of the Magazine (which will be kept steadily in view by the Editors) is to establish a connecting link between uninstructed love of Nature and accurate scientific knowledge. Those who know most are not always those who love most; but additional knowledge will certainly increase the pleasure of those who are already Nature-lovers, *i.e.*, Selbornians. Accordingly, the articles in the Magazine will not be of a technically scientific nature, but the writers will seek to combine accuracy of statement with a popular style. Such topics will be chosen as are likely to interest the ordinary reader, who is not a trained botanist or zoologist, but wishes to learn more about the Flowers, Birds, and Insects, which attract his attention in his daily walks, if he lives in the country, or which have caught his eye in his holiday rambles, if he is one who passes most of his time "in populous city pent."

It is believed that a large number of interesting observations, made by those who use their eyes for the purpose of Nature-study, are lost, because the observers do not think what they have noticed is of sufficient value to be worthy of record in any scientific Journal. We may hope that *Nature Notes* will do much to utilise such observations and to collate the experience of various observers.

Records of the *Earliest Leafing and Flowering of Plants*, and the time when the last flowers are seen, will be inserted. A useful little Handbook for those who wish to compile such a calendar is "The Naturalists' Diary," by Mr. Roberts.

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that they were preserving a space which should be kept in its rural beauty for those who were least able to get far away into the real country, and who wished for something more unconventional and quieter than the London Park."

A portion of the land, known as East Heath Park, has come into the possession of the London County Council. Before it became public property a wide road had been begun by the proprietor, when he was contemplating the letting of the land for building: but it was never completed, and was covered with grass. "What was the amazement of those who knew the spot to find that the first act of the London County Council was to give orders for carrying this wide road to either extremity of the new land, to prolong it at both ends over the heath, and to widen a small agricultural road—practically little more than a footpath. This road is now daily being continued; it leads to no populous district, it connects not even one group of houses with the Heath. Yet the devastation it is causing is pitiable to see. The wild beauty of nature is destroyed by a formal black, wide road; the soft slopes of turf are cut away—a formal footpath runs parallel to it. Stakes are to be seen across the Heath, marking out where it is proposed to carry even further the ghastly length of desolate road."

It is to be hoped that the strong local protest which is being made may avert what is nothing less than a catastrophe, and certainly the very reverse of what those who subscribed to purchase the ground had in view. We heartily support Miss Octavia Hill in her protest, and only regret that our space will not allow us to reproduce this in full. The following are its concluding sentences.

"At much sacrifice this land has been rescued from building. Let us do what we can to preserve it in its full beauty. It is a mistake to think that rural scenery is enjoyed only by the artist and literary man. Many working people have a keen appreciation of it, even some who would find it hard to put the impression into words. There are plenty of places for those who love broad roads. This land was purchased mainly for the pedestrians of all classes. It is too small to be traversed by roads, which would cut it into fragments."

THE RECORDING OF LOCAL NAMES AND FOLK-LORE.

"NOT only are animals and plants disappearing in various parts of our land, but the quaint old legends concerning them, the ancient superstitions which throw so much light on Comparative Mythology, the fanciful and often poetical Local Names—all these, valuable almost as the subjects they commemorate, are rapidly dying out. We

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shall endeavour to secure what still lingers of this mass of old-world tradition, and shall receive with gratitude communications from those who will note down Provincial Names of Birds and Plants and the Folk-lore, perpetually varying, and yet essentially the same, which has clustered round the animal and vegetable kingdom."

We reproduce this paragraph from "Our Programme" because we feel that the work which it recommends is one of the most useful which the Selborne Society can take up. Every dweller in the country can take part in it, and the results cannot fail to be interesting as well as useful.

In order to make the collection of local names—of animals, birds, insects, plants, fossils, or any natural object—as simple and useful as possible, it may be well to say a word or two as to the way in which it should be carried out. The limited space at our disposal, as compared with the extent of the subject, renders brevity essential; and this will be secured if our contributors will record only such names and folk-lore as have been collected by themselves, with, of course, any *local* information tending to the explanation of either, but with a careful avoidance of speculative derivations.*

What is wanted—whether for names or folk-lore—is an actual record of these as they exist. Take an intelligent country child for a walk, and ask it the names of the common birds, flowers, and insects which cross your path; note these down and send them to the Editors, adding place and date. If any name strikes you as especially odd, ask *why* the object is so called. The *usual* answer will be, "I don't know;" but occasionally interesting information will be elicited. If you obtain confirmation of the names from others, note this, especially when a name seems to be in general use locally. Spring and early summer are the best times for collecting names; the revival of natural objects after their winter sleep attracts more attention than the appearance of those which come later.

Do not trouble to quote books, unless they should be of special value as bearing on local dialects. "Dear old Gerard," who is usually cited at second or third hand, must be avoided; and, above all, the well-known and often inexact quotations, of which many volumes of plant and animal lore mainly consist, must be entirely boycotted. In our limited space it is important to publish only what is worthy of permanent record; and if the work indicated is taken up properly by Selbornians, our pages will soon be insufficient to contain the useful information which will be sent in.

* An excellent illustration of the kind of information required is afforded by the paper printed on p. 23, which was forwarded after these lines were in type.

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THE MIGRATION OF BIRDS.

By the Rev. A. RAWSON, M.A.

I READ with much interest Mr. Gordon's article on the "Departure of Birds" in the October number of the Selborne Magazine, and his suggestion that notes should be taken as carefully of the departures as of the arrivals of our migrants. This is no doubt practicable, but I think there is a difficulty, not in compiling the record, but in drawing any conclusions from it. There is a great mystery about the migration of birds. Many theories have been put forth as to its causes and its regularity, but I think there can be no doubt that "food" has much to do with it—at least, with the emigration, if not with the immigration, of our summer birds of passage.

With regard to arrivals in spring, these consist entirely of old birds, which are hardier and more able to take care of themselves than their progeny in autumn. It is doubtful whether these spring migrants are impelled to seek our shores through lack of food in the countries from which they come; but the migratory fever seizes them, and off they set, whatever the cause may be. It is well known that if the early arrivals find it cold here, and *therefore* insect life is kept back, they (the swallow tribe, certainly) disappear again for a time; still they have arrived with regularity, been seen, and noted. With the autumnal departures things are different. Here we have both old and young birds, many of the latter quite incapable of a long flight; and so long as a genial temperature keeps insects from hibernating, the food supply is kept up, and these few remain, though the main body may have gone. The consequence is that the departures extend over a considerable interval, and an observer must be constantly on the watch for a month or more for the "last seen" of any particular bird.

I may instance this in the Swallow tribe. Here they begin to congregate on my house in the last week in August, and have practically gone by the middle of September; but in 1886, I saw one single Swallow on October 22nd, and in 1887, a remarkable year, many were flying about Furness Abbey on October 7th. In 1885, at Bromley, in Kent, I saw Martins as late as November 16th. In the same year, at the same place, the Swift was seen September 8th—a late occurrence, and in the last week of September, 1878, my son shot the Alpine Swift on the north coast of Devon, several of the common species being in company with it.

I have taken the Hirundines as being birds easy of observation, but no doubt the same is true of other migrants; they *must* have food, and owing to some peculiarity in the season, it was there for them, so they remained late. My opinion as to this is confirmed, because, in regard to my note of the very late swal-

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lows in 1875, I find I have appended, as a memorandum to the entry: "The weather has been most remarkably mild, and very wet. Wind variable."

Now, to take the other side—the *arrivals* of the spring migrants. Here are a few observations, kept at Bromley Common for fifteen years, of two or three of the ordinary migrants, from which will be seen how extremely regular they are in their appearance. If it was possible for any one observer to catch the *first* arrival, no doubt the regularity would be found more remarkable; but an observer may see, for instance, a nightingale hopping on his lawn, and not see another for a week or ten days. Had he not, by mere accident, seen it then, his entry for arrival would be, for that year, ten days later; but, in spite of this, the list will show how regular these arrivals really are, while the same observer can testify how irregular is the autumnal departure.

I think, therefore, that though any one may jot down in his note-book the date of "the last bird seen," no practical conclusions can be drawn from such observations as to any *average* date for the departure of our summer migrants.

LIST OF ARRIVALS—1856-1870.

Bromley Common, Kent.

	Earliest.		Latest.
Cuckoo...	April 3	...	April 25
Martin	April 19	...	April 28
Nightingale	April 9	...	April 24
Swallow	April 9	...	April 25
Whitethroat	April 16	...	April 28
Wryneck	April 3	...	April 18

THE INTRODUCTION OF FOREIGN WEEDS.

BY GEORGE NICHOLSON, A.L.S.,
Curator of the Royal Gardens, Kew.

(*Concluded from page* 6.)

ERIGERON CANADENSE, the Horse-weed or Butter-weed of the Northern United States, is quite at home in the neighbourhood of Kew, and in many parts of England, and is not at all likely to disappear. This weed is, at the present time, spread over a considerable portion of the earth's surface. It is said that it first found its way to Europe in the middle of the seventeenth century; a single seed discovered in a stuffed bird was sown, and the descendants of this solitary stranger soon distributed themselves throughout Europe, and took possession of places to which they had never been conveyed by man. Another North American plant—a much handsomer one than that which I have just mentioned, and

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a more recent arrival (having been first noticed less than half a century ago)—is spreading rapidly along the banks of many of our rivers. This is one of the Balsams, the Spotted Touch-me-not (*Impatiens fulva*).

Probably the most familiar of all the strangers which, in our own portion of the Eastern Hemisphere, have made themselves so thoroughly at home, is the "American Water-weed," *Anacharis canadensis*. Introduced into Ireland about 1836, and first noticed in this country in 1841, this plant rapidly took almost entire possession of thousands of acres of water, choking up slow streams and ponds, and increasing to such an extent in canals as to render necessary the outlay of considerable sums for labour in cutting and removing the dense massy growths. In the neighbourhood of Kew this plant is not nearly so abundant as it was some years ago; and in some places it has—after holding undisputed sway for a long time—almost disappeared. Whether this is due to the exhaustion in the soil of the specific nutriment required by the plant, or to the purely vegetative reproduction which has taken place—the male plant never having been discovered in this country until within the last few years in Edinburgh—it is impossible to say. The piece of ornamental water between the Palm House and the Museum No. 1, at Kew, was, less than twenty years ago, one mass of this weed, and much expense was incurred in the attempt to keep it under. Water fowl were kept there then as they are now, and the late curator, Mr. Smith, did not attribute the total disappearance of the *Anacharis* to the agency of the birds.

If, however, we can charge America with having sent us several unwelcome visitors, that continent, as well as most other temperate parts of the world, can turn the tables on us very successfully. A goodly number of British plants have made themselves thoroughly at home in far distant lands. Some of our thistles have taken possession of immense tracts of land in South America, where they assume proportions unknown in our island home. I quote the following remarks from a lecture on "The Distribution of the North American Flora," delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain by Sir Joseph Hooker some years ago.

"Whatever countries beyond the seas we may visit, in the temperate regions of the globe, we find that their vegetation has been invaded, and in many places profoundly modified, by insignificant plants from other countries; and these are, in almost all cases, natives of North-Western Europe. Nearly forty years ago I arrived at night at the Falkland Islands, when a boat was sent ashore to communicate the ship's arrival to the Governor. Being eager to know something of the vegetation of the Islands, I asked the officer in charge of the boat to pluck me any plants he could feel for, as it was too dark to see anything; and the armful he brought to me consisted of nothing but the English Shepherd's Purse. On another occasion, landing on a small un-

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inhabited island nearly at the Antipodes—Lord Auckland's Island, south of New Zealand—the first evidence I met with of its having been previously visited by man was the English Chickweed. This I traced to a mound which marked the grave of a British sailor, which was covered with the plant, doubtless the offspring of seed that had adhered to the spade or mattock with which the grave had been dug. It was hence no surprise to me to find myself, on landing at Boston, U.S.A., greeted by Western European plants, that had established themselves as colonists in New England. Of these, the first was the wild Chicory, growing far more luxuriantly than I ever saw it elsewhere, forming a tangled mass of stem and branches, studded with turquoise blue blossoms, and covering acres of ground; the very next plants that attracted my attention were the Ox-eye Daisy and the May-weed, which together whitened the banks in some places, and which I subsequently traced more than half-way across the Continent. These and more than two hundred and fifty other old English plants, which are now peopling New England, were for the most part fellow-emigrants and fellow-colonists with the Anglo-Saxon, having (as seeds) accompanied him across the Atlantic, and having, like him, asserted their supremacy over, and displaced, a certain number of natives of the soil."

HAMPSHIRE LOCAL NAMES.

By W. M. E. FOWLER.

TAKING an interest in local names, I tried during the past year to find out what the children here (Liphook) call the commoner plants, but have not succeeded very well. The following, however are from my list:—

Bread-and-cheese ...	*Malva sylvestris*
Shiver grass	*Briza media*
*Bee-flower	*Scabiosa arvensis*
Hedge lilies or lilies ...	*Convolvulus sepium*
Hurts	*Vaccinium Vitis Idæa*
Ladies' shoes	*Lotus corniculatus*
Penny-winkles	*Vinca minor*
Cats' tails	*Typha latifolia*
Lords-and-Ladies } Bloody fingers } ...	*Arum maculatum*
Cuckoo-sorrow (sorrel)	*Rumex Acetosa*
Shirt-button	*Stellaria Holostea*
*Smell-smock	*Oxalis Acetosella*
*Sailor-button	Any of the Campions
*Yellow-spit..... ...	*Chelidonium majus*
*Morning-star	*Ornithogalum umbellatum*

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Vern	... ...	Bracken
*Black-spem	... ...	Black Spleenwort
Bird's-eye	... ...	The larger Veronicas
Weather-glass	... ...	*Anagallis arvensis*
Cuckoo-flower	... ...	*Cardamine pratensis*

The following are the bird, mammal and fish names :—

*Blood lark	... ...	?
*Wet-your-neck	...	?
*Fork-tail	... ...	Swallow
*Brown dove	... ...	?
Furze-chucker	... ...	Win-chat
Bunt or *Bent lark	...	?
*Mudlark	... ...	Skylark
Scutty	... ...	Wren
Flutter-mouse	... ...	Bat
Seven-sleeper / Sleep-mouse	...	Dormouse
Nine-eyes	... ...	Leach
Stone-rocker / Cheebby-head	...	Lampern
Quid-worm	... ...	Centipede

With regard to "larks," the Mudlark is the Skylark, so called from its nest being lined with mud. The "Blood-lark" is a puzzle. The boys say: "He builds a nest on the ground, he do, and lays eggs most like a Yellow-hammer." Is it a Meadow-pipit? The "Wet-your-neck" is so called because before wet weather it cries, "Wet your neck! Wet your neck!" Can any reader say what bird it is? Can it be a Wood-pecker, which in many parts of England is known as the Wet-bird or Wet-fowl? A Wren's nest, as well as the bird itself, is known as a "scutty."

I once asked a school boy, who is fond of natural history and knows a good deal about the common animals and birds, why a Quid-worm was so named. He looked much astonished, and said: "Why, because they gives he to cows as can't chew the quid; they puts he down their throats."

[This interesting communication contains several names, indicated by a prefixed asterisk, which do not appear in our most complete catalogues of popular nomenclature—the Rev. C. Swainson's "Folk-lore and Provincial Names of British Birds," and Messrs. Britten and Holland's "Dictionary of English Plant-names," two works which we have adopted as our standard of reference.

"Bunt Lark" is applied in Norfolk to the Corn Bunting. The Wren is called "Scutty" in Sussex, and "Cutty" or "Cut" in several counties, from Welsh *cwt*, a short tail. The Quail is called "Weet my feet" (E. Lothian, N. Ireland), and "Wet my lip" (W. Norfolk), but some other bird is no doubt intended in the above list.

"Quidworm" is an interesting name. "Quid" is a form of "cud," and the Cudweed was also called "Quidwort" two hundred years ago from its somewhat similar use. "They bruise [it] small, and put a quantity of fat thereunto, and so convey it 'nto the beast's mouth to swallow, that hath lost his quide, and so he will amend."—(MASCAL, *Government of Cattel*, 1662, pp. 40, 242.)—EDS.]

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PROTECTION OF BIRDS ON THE CONTINENT.

BY A VICE-PRESIDENT.

(*Continued from page 7.*)

AS a result of the discussions recorded in the previous article, a committee was appointed, and the members sat for four hours on the following day. M. Borggreve proposed, firstly, to beg H.I.H. the Prince to use his influence in obtaining through the diplomatic corps from various governments in Europe and North Africa, a legal protection of birds during the first half of the year, and during the years 1886, 1887 and 1888, for species which were not prejudicial to the interests of agriculture, preservation of game and pisciculture. Secondly, to ask ornithologists to note in a given district, by means of comparative tables, the number of birds nesting in 1884, 1885, 1886 and 1887, and to forward these tables to a second or third Congress. Professor Giglioli (Italy) said that some of the matter submitted by MM. Fatio, De Hayek (Austria), De Tchusi (Austria), De Pelzeln (France) was already included in the agreement between Austria and Italy, and that other proposals would encounter unsurmountable opposition in Italy. It seemed to him impossible to introduce fresh obstacles to the capture of birds in certain parts of his country, where from time immemorial people had been accustomed to go in pursuit of birds.

Dr. Palacky, M. De Hayell, MM. Zeller and Kermenic, Doctors Schier, Schiarazzi, Russ and Pollen discussed M. Fatio's proposal at some length, and finally the following resolution was carried:—

> The first Ornithological Congress of Vienna begs the Minister of Home and Foreign Affairs at Vienna to take the necessary steps towards obtaining the consent of various nations of the globe to the establishment of an international convention, having for its aim the publication of draft legal schemes based on these two principles:—(1) During the first half of the legal year (Kalendjahr) or during the period which corresponds to it, it is forbidden, except to persons duly authorised, to destroy (erlagen) birds with engines other than firearms, to capture them, take their eggs, and trade either with the said birds or their eggs. (2) The capture of the said birds *en masse* is entirely forbidden.

With this vote the business of the first section terminated.

In concluding his report, M. Oustalet begged to draw the attention of the Minister of Agriculture to the following points:—

The increasing war which is waged against birds, and especially insectivorous birds, blackbirds, wrens, fly-catchers, swallows, &c., seriously injures the interests of agriculture by permitting the development of myriads of destructive insects. The result of inquiries made by several Agricultural Societies and by the Acclimatisation Society of Paris is that the existence of various kinds of birds of undisputed utility is seriously threatened, and that certain passeræ, formerly very common

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throughout the whole of France, have disappeared from several departments. It is then highly important to bring forward some remedy for a condition of affairs, the dangers of which have been already pointed out in various documents, and especially in the report of M. de la Sicotiere, in the notes by M. Froidefond and Millet, and in the works of M. Lescuyer.

In order to put an end to these hecatombs of birds which cannot be justified by any economic reasons, and which only afford in return a contemptible amount of food, various means may be employed. The most efficacious will doubtless be that adopted by an enormous majority at the Congress. It would amount to the entire prevention, during the whole year, of the capture *en masse* of all birds of any species whatsoever. In specifying that by the capture *en masse*, the taking of enormous quantities of birds by means of nets, draw nets, trammel nets, snares of various kinds and bird lime is meant, all the dodges so dear to the poachers, who annihilate hundreds and thousands of birds in a few hours, will be upset.

M. Oustalet in his report then referred to the resolution with respect to the sole use of firearms as destructive engines during the shooting season, to proper laws, and to the yearly publication of a list of birds to be legally taken during the said season, and further pointed out to the Minister of Agriculture that the rights given to the prefects in France, by the law of 1844, would be curtailed, and would no longer cover the method of capture, nor the formulation of the list of birds to be captured, but would simply empower them to fix the limits of the close season in each department.

As a means of preserving useful birds, it was proposed to place artificial nests in the trees, shrubs and hedges belonging to the state property.

With respect to wild fowl M. Oustalet suggests a restriction in granting shooting licenses on the coast, with the view of giving the migratory birds and the *balayeurs des grèves* a better chance of existence.

M. Oustalet attaches great importance to the advantages to be derived by thorough instruction on important ornithological questions in the agricultural colleges, and also to the diffusion of accurate knowledge of the habits of useful and injurious animals, either by means of popular publications, or by lectures amongst the inhabitants of towns and villages.

This brings us to believe that the establishment of an Alphonse Karr Society on the lines of our Selborne Society, and with the approval and support of the Ministers of Public Instruction and of Agriculture, the authorities of the Acclimatisation Society, &c., would be both popular and useful in France, where sentiment (not sentimentality) and science can go well together hand in hand.

In a future number we hope to be able to refer to the documents quoted by M. Oustalet and our own colonial papers on the subject of bird preservation.

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CHILDREN'S COLUMN.

Un Chat Fidèle.

Poor pussy of old was commonly said
To be fawning and fickle, not high bred.
She would mince and strut, and would proudly purr;
She would arch her back, and stick out her fur,
Selfishly seeking what was to be had.
Though timid, she's sly, and all that is bad!
Thus, all her life is to cupboard-love given;
To mend her mean ways men in vain have striven.
Still would I tell how *our* tortoise-shell cat,
When "Cyrus" languish'd alone on his mat;
Often too weak on his legs to get up
Too poorly to bark, to romp, or to sup;
How to his couch little dainties she brought,
For him to take of her own food she sought;
Of a bone, or a scrap, or mouse just kill'd,
She would beg his acceptance if he will'd,
Or, best of all, a small morsel of meat:
He would touch with his tongue, but could not eat.
Then with it away she would gently steal,
And so all alone she would make her meal.
By pure instinct taught in Dame Nature's ways
See the high culture here for noblest praise.
Oft might rough hoyden or ruthless young brat,
Learn lessons of love from this courteous cat!

30A, *Wimpole Street.* WILLIAM WHITE, F.S.A.

Mr. Chink, the Chaffinch.—Last Easter I was staying in a village near Oxford, and the morning after my arrival we were sitting at breakfast when my host suddenly said to me: "There's your Chaffinch; he wants his breakfast. Do get up and give him some." "*My* Chaffinch!" I said in surprise. "What *do* you mean?" They then reminded me that two years before, when I was spending Christmas there, one night during a very heavy snowstorm my cousin and I were sitting up late over the fire in my bedroom, when there was a flapping against the window. Thinking it was the snow, we at first took no notice; but the second time it came flop against the window, I got up, exclaiming, "It must be a bird wanting to come in," and on our opening the window in flew a very beautiful cock chaffinch, having evidently lost his way in the storm. Quite exhausted he flew straight on to my bed, and after some time the warmth began to revive him and he looked about, not objecting to being gently stroked. We then began to wonder what we should do with him, for to turn him out again that dreadful night was quite impossible, and there were no cages in the house. At last my cousin found a meat safe into which we put him, with some cotton wool, crumbs and water. We were half afraid that he would die in the night, but were next morning delighted to find him quite well and very perky—such a little beauty! The sun was now shining brightly and the snow melting fast, so we let him out, feeling quite sad at parting with him. I went away that day, but now hear that Mr. Chaffy came back regularly every day to be fed and became very tame. All through the summer and following winter he came, and in the spring he brought his little wife with him, and they would perch on the trees close round the windows calling "Chink, chink!" till they were fed. By this time Mr. Chink became so tame that he would perch close to my cousins at afternoon tea in the garden, when he was always fed. But one day when a piece of cake was given to him he did not take it as usual, but seemed anxious to attract notice to something in a flower border near, flying backwards and forwards and chirping. At last my

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cousin said: "He has got something to shew us: I must go and see what it is." She got up and followed Chink to the border, where two little baby chaffinches were sitting sheltered by a plant. Immediately Chaffy flew back and fetched the cake, and proceeded to feed the little ones, evidently satisfied now that his children were noticed and admired. When I was there at Easter he was as constant as ever, and his "Chink, Chink!" would fetch my cousin out of bed at five o'clock to give him his early meal of biscuit from her window, where a box was kept on purpose for Chaffy's use. When I last heard he was still a constant visitor in the Vicarage garden, where his presence would be greatly missed.

B. E. E.

SELBORNIANA.

A Browning Query.—Can any reader tell me what plant Mr. Browning had in view in the following lines?—

"One plant,
Woods have in May, that starts up green
Save a sole streak which, so to speak,
Is spring's blood, spilt the leaves between."—*May and Death.*

The arum or one of the spotted orchids suggest themselves, but neither of these has "a *sole* streak." G. S. R.

The Spelling of Yellow Hammer.—A youthful naturalist friend, recently visiting the Natural History Museum, was especially delighted with the collection of British birds and their nests—a collection which well deserves the attention of all Selbornians. But he was much exercised by what he considered a mistake in the spelling of Yellow "ammer," which, he said, ought to be Yellow Hammer. I, of course, assured him that the Museum authorities would not make a mistake even in such a small matter; and having thus silenced if not convinced him, I proceeded to establish my position. To my surprise, however, I found that Dr. Murray's researches had not enabled him to obtain any authority whatever for Yarrell's introduction of this spelling in 1846; and moreover, on further investigation, I found that Professor Newton, in the fourth edition of Yarrell's work, had pronounced against the proposed correction. The Museum authorities, it may be hoped, will therefore see their way to restoring the usual spelling, when the labels for the cases of birds next come under revision. I append Professor Newton's interesting note.

"In former editions of this work the author strove to restore what he believed to have been the first English name of this bird—Yellow Ammer. As might be expected in such a case, custom, whether right or wrong, would not give way to the proposed amendment, and Yellow Hammer, with its abbreviation Yellow Ham, have been commonly printed from the days of Turner (1544) and Merrett (1667) to the present time. There can indeed be no question of 'Hammer' (in this sense) being strictly cognate with the German *Ammer*, but it would seem that prefixing the letter h to the word is not wholly an English peculiarity, since there is some ground for believing that *Hammer*, which now survives in *Hämmerling*, was equally with *Ammer*, a Teutonic form. Another early spelling of this word in both languages was 'Amber,' used in 1668 by Charleton (Onomasticon Zooicon, p. 80), and by Ray in 1674 (Call. Engl., &c., p. 88). Perhaps the parent form was the old German *Embritz*, whence comes the Latinized modification *Emberiza*, spelt by some ancient authors *Embriza*. Mr. Skeat, in a communication kindly made on this point to the editor, remarks that the letter *h* is seldom wrongly prefixed, and cites among the few examples of the practice, 'hermit,' 'horde' and 'humbles'—the roots of which are probably *eremita*, *ordeu* and *umbilicus* respectively. Mr. J. W. Cartmell has added to these words 'hogshead,' which ought to have been 'oxhead,' from the Dutch *ochshood*, and 'howlet' instead of 'owlet'—the last being almost an exact parallel to 'hammer' in the present bird's name. Dr. Robert Latham's assertion (Dict. Engl. Lang.

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ii. p. 1432) that 'the derivation is the A. S. *hama*=skin, clothing, covering' seems to be wholly unsupported by evidence." (Yarrell's Hist. Brit. Birds, ii. 43).

G. S. R.

Note of the Cuckoo.—Mrs. Linley Blathwayt records the following interesting observations made by her at Batheaston:—Before the return of spring, I should like to call attention to the note of the Cuckoo, which is commonly said to be a major or a minor third, Beethoven giving it as the former in his Pastoral Symphony. I have frequently heard it a most decided major second, and sometimes a perfect fourth.

Last May for a few days, I wrote down what I heard, taking the pitch from the Philharmonic tuning fork. On the evening of the 13th it was a major third, F to D flat. On the following morning, when the birds seemed to be answering each other all round, the major thirds were, E to C, and F sharp to D; the minor, E to C sharp, F to D and G to E. Major second F to E flat. On the 16th I also heard a second, E to D, and on the 19th a fourth F sharp to C sharp.

The Milliner's Scheme of Creation.—We have received the following ingenious speculations on this subject: — Having seen the hint in your magazine suggesting a sketch of what might possibly be a milliner's view of creation, I venture to send you the following which I think would be a plausible theory to account for the deeds of an Anti-Selbornian milliner:—

"Latterly we have heard much from scientific men about a certain theory by which they think they account for many natural phenomena: it is usually known as the doctrine of the 'Survival of the Fittest.' We milliners know a great deal about nature, more perhaps than scientific men generally think. Do we not every season have fresh consignments of birds' skins sent to us from abroad?—do we not know exactly which wears best, what colours last longest, and how, for instance, to patch up a sea-gull with a few cock's feathers, so that a far superior bird for trimming, than any which can be found in nature, is produced? Our knowledge and experience ought surely to entitle us to an opinion upon these matters.

"Now the theory which these scientific men hold, does not tally with facts, and must therefore be dismissed as untenable. The principle which does hold true throughout the glorious realm of nature, is no other than this—'The Destruction of the Fittest.' What can be a more beautiful theory than this? Every creature—bird, beast or butterfly—is meant for destruction, just in so far as it is beautiful and fitting for the adornment of ladies' dress.

"What is the use of hundreds of birds flitting about aimlessly in some distant forest, or rearing their young on some lonely island, far from the reach of men? Surely such things were never intended to be. Of course such a fate may have been destined for some ill-formed or sadly plumaged birds, but never for the gorgeous humming-bird who flames out so royally from among the velvet trimming, or for the bird of paradise whose exquisite plumes can never shew to as great advantage as when drooping from a gracefully shaped hat. Even the robin redbreast has lately been found to have some claim to destruction, and the great law of nature is therefore taking effect, as is shewn by the frequent appearance of one or even two of these little songsters nestling daintily in a lady's bonnet—a now very familiar natural (?) phenomenon.

"One word more, and I think I shall have made my point clear. Darwin's definition of the term 'Fittest' is somewhat long and complicated. Roughly speaking, he uses it as meaning those animals or plants whose organisms are best calculated to help them in the struggle for existence. Here I must ask the reader to note the difference between Darwin's phraseology and mine. 'The Fittest,' as I use it, means of course—(and this meaning is surely more natural than the scientific one), such animals and birds, more especially the latter, which 'fit' best with the hats, bonnets, and, in fact the whole toilette, in fashion at any given time. 'Fitness' is also shewn in the facility with which a bird may be sewn on to any material—by the way in which it resists the wet—by its general wearing qualities, and by many other smaller details which will readily occur to one who has daily experience of such things, and who . . . &c. . . . . ."

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But the reader will by this time have had nearly enough of this remarkable argument, and I must leave the scientific naturalist to refute this novel theory as best he may. Z. S.

A Blackbird Story.—The Rev. C. S. Millard writes from Costock Rectory: I feel sure that many of the readers of the Selborne Society's Magazine will be interested in the following account that has been sent me by Mrs. Symonds of Saxelbye Rectory of the strange conduct of a blackbird last spring. "The story of the blackbird is very striking. Two blackbirds built in a hole in the hayrick that had been pulled out by the cows. My man constantly passed by the hen bird while she was sitting, and he noticed that she seemed very tame. At length he stroked her on her nest, and used continually to do so as he passed and repassed her, she seemingly being not the least disconcerted, and once she allowed him to lift her off the nest. Five young birds were hatched and seemed to be thriving, but one morning, when my man was going to milk, he was surprised by the hen blackbird flying to him, making a great noise, almost hitting him in the face, and then flying back to her nest. He suspected something wrong and followed her. On arriving at the nest he found a magpie (I had allowed two to build in a spinny hard by) standing on the cock bird, which he had killed, as he had also killed three of the young blackbirds. Having driven the magpie off, he took the two surviving little birds and put them into the hedge, where the poor hen-bird, who sat by watching the whole proceeding, immediately joined them. I do think that the way in which the bird recognised in my man one who would assist her if solicited, very touching."

Mildness of the Season.—The Rev. W. S. H. Samler, writing from the Vicarage, South Stoke, Bath, sends us the following list of plants in bloom in his garden on the 31st of January:—White Arabis, Violets (purple and white), Primrose, Christmas Rose, Snowdrop, Crocus, Hepatica (blue and pink), Daisy, Laurustinus, Pansy, Polyanthus, Helleborus viridis, Aubrietia græca, Scilla, Anemone (ordinary), Anemone fulgens, Gentian acaulis, Wall Flower, Winter Stock, Yellow Jasmine, three kinds of Berberis, Periwinkle, Pyrus Japonica, China Rose, Hyacinth.

A Bad Example.—Mr. Marcus B. Huish writes from the New University Club: "The Committee has continued to purchase, whenever possible, any rare bird shot in the district." This extract from the Annual Report of the Cardiff Art Library and Museum for the year 1889 is an example of the encouragement held out to ignorant and unenlightened folk by the worshipful the Mayor, a large body of Councillors, and I believe, the Naturalist Society of Cardiff, who form the committee in question. Comment is needless, except that I think it would be well if the Selborne Society would present a few of their pamphlets to the Free Library and so endeavour to counteract the teaching now in vogue at the most important educational establishment in South Wales.

MARCUS B. HUISH.

Holly Berries.—Mr. Manley Hopkins writes from Haslemere: There is, perhaps, no part of England so abundant in holly as West Surrey. The trees and hedge-bushes last year were prolific in berries, and even more so the previous year. This season there are none. In our walks and drives about this neighbourhood we fail to discover a single instance of the scarlet fruit. A farmer in Hertfordshire tells me that his trees are in similar condition with the exception of a single tree, which is loaded with berries. The pious idea that *Deus pascit Corvos*, and provides much food for the small birds against a hard winter, is, we think, groundless; but this winter proves nothing as to its truth or falsity. Probably hollies and also hazelnuts overblew themselves in the late previous years, and that this is the season of rest and recovery.

The Plague of Rats; Cause and Effect.—The Rev. D. W. Barrett, of Barnet, sends us two paragraphs from the *Peterborough Advertiser*, of January 25th, 1890, which well show the wisdom of amateur efforts at the readjustment of the balance of nature:—

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STOATS AND WEASLES (*Sic.*)

6s 6d. each will be given for STOATS and 5s. each for WEASLES, and Carriage will be paid from any part of the Country.*

A PLAGUE OF RATS.

A plague of rats is raging in the east of England. The farmers cannot keep their wheat in consequence of the numbers in the stacks, and have to thresh and sell out.

MR. H. G. O. KENDALL, of The Hyde, Hatfield, Herts, also writes, calling attention to the fact that the preservation of "game" often causes the destruction under the name of "vermin" of many natural checks to rat plagues, and thus tends to produce a bread famine.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

WE have received from various authors and publishers books of special interest to Selbornians. Reviews of several of these works have been written for NATURE NOTES, but the demands upon our space are such that we are unable in the present number to do more than give the names and publishers of the following:—

About Robins: Songs, Facts and Legends, collected and illustrated by Lady Lindsay, R.I.: George Routledge and Sons.

Ancient Cures, Charms and Usages of Ireland: Contributions to Irish Lore, by Lady Wilde: Ward and Downey.

Sylvanus Redivivus (Memoirs of the Rev. John Mitford and Edward Jesse), by Mrs. Houston: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington.

Science and Scientists, by the Rev. John Gerard, S.J.: Catholic Truth Society.

Idylls of the Field, by F. A. Knight: Elliot Stock.

Haunts of Nature, by Worsley-Benison: Elliot Stock.

The Butterfly, by John Stuttard: Fisher Unwin.

In Tennyson-land, by J. C. Walters: Redway.

OFFICIAL NOTICES, MEETINGS, &c.

THE Hon. Treasurer begs to acknowledge the following surplus funds received from branch Secretaries for the general purposes of the Society:

Atalanta ...	£0	5	8	Kent ...	£2	0	6
Bayswater ...	2	0	0	Liverpool ...	0	18	7½
Bournemouth ...	1	0	0	Northern Heights ...	1	10	6
Chichester ...	0	11	11	Nottingham ...	0	17	10½
Clapton ...	0	4	3½	Petersfield ...	1	10	7
Haslemere ...	5	0	0	Putney ...	3	0	0
Isle of Wight ...	3	1	0	Southampton ...	1	1	6
Kensington ...	3	0	0	Weybridge ...	0	16	10

AT the Annual Meeting of the Lower Thames Valley Branch of the Society, an important report was submitted showing the large amount of work which had been done by the Branch during the year, in the way of defending the beauties of

* Presumably for New Zealand or Australia.—EDS.

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the Thames against the various agencies which threaten their destruction. We should have been glad to quote largely from this valuable report, but can only give the following extract dealing with the preservation of Sudbrook Park. "The last item of news bearing on this important subject is that on January 30th Her Majesty's Commissioners of Woods and Forests received an important deputation, asking them not to take any action in respect to the sale of Sudbrook Park, or the letting of any portion of it for building purposes, until the whole matter had been laid before the House of Commons for their decision. The deputation included the Right Hon. Shaw Lefevre, M.P.; Mr. Bruce, M.P.; Sir J. Whittaker Ellis, M.P.; Mr. Burt (Chairman of the Richmond Vestry), and leading members of the Open Spaces Association, the Metropolitan Playing Grounds Association, the Preservation of Commons Association, the Kyrle Society, &c., &c. Mr. Edward King specially represented the Selborne Society. The interests of landscape and other artists were represented by Mr. M. H. Spielmann (Editor of the *Magazine of Art*). Mr. Skewes-Cox, the Chairman of the Joint Executive Committee for the Preservation of Sudbrook Park, was also present. Without prophesying, your committee venture to express the hope that the result of that interview may influence the future of Sudbrook Park, so far as that it is associated with the permanent preservation of open spaces round London."

WE regret that a long list of names of new members is unavoidably crowded out, as the space at our disposal is, as explained below, quite inadequate to the demands upon it.

SUBSCRIPTIONS to the Selborne Society for 1890 were due on January 1st, and if not already paid should be forwarded to the Hon. Treasurer (9, Adam Street, Adelphi, W.C.), or in the case of branch members, to the treasurers of their respective branches.

LETTERS on the general business of the Society should *not* be forwarded to the Editors of NATURE NOTES; but to the Secretary of the Selborne Society, 9, Adam Street, Adelphi, W.C., *to whom, or to the Secretary of the nearest Branch, those who are desirous of becoming members should apply.*

EDITORIAL NOTE.

WE are happy to be able to report most favourably as to the success of the first number of NATURE NOTES, the Selborne Society's Magazine. A much larger number of copies have had to be printed than we anticipated, and the third edition is now almost exhausted. NATURE NOTES has been the subject of many appreciative notices in important papers, expressing in warm terms sympathy with the objects of the Society and approval of its magazine. The members of the Selborne Society have responded with enthusiasm to our request for support in the matter of letters, contributions and cuttings. One result of this is that we are unable to insert a large number of interesting articles and letters, many of which, however, we hope to utilise in future numbers. It is hoped that it may be possible hereafter to enlarge the magazine; in no other manner can justice be done to the large number of communications we have received. Meanwhile we trust that our kind correspondents, whether their contributions have been inserted or not, will accept this expression of gratitude for their assistance, and will continue to supply us with short original articles and items of information on matters Selbornian. It is particularly requested that subscriptions and letters bearing on the general business of the Society should *not* be sent to the Editors. Editorial communications should be forwarded (not later than the 4th of each month, if insertion is desired in the current number) to the Rev. PERCY MYLES, 1, Argyle Road, Ealing, W.

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"Your work is far more satisfactory than other works which have come before me professing more than they performed. Your pages bear evidence of careful and enthusiastic observation and study of our birds, and, while containing much having that value to science which always attaches to records of original observation, is, at the same time, by no means too technical for bird lovers who are not ornithologists. There is an out-of-doors' atmosphere to your pen-pictures, a flavour of the woods and fields, which cannot fail to be appreciated by all who appreciate Nature."—E. P. BICKNELL *of the American Ornithologists' Union.*

Crown 8vo, with one Plate, Cloth (published 3s. 6d.), 2s. 6d.

THE HOUSE SPARROW, by J. H. Gurney, jun., Col. C. Russell, and Dr. Elliott Coues. 1885.

CONTENTS:—The House Sparrow, by an Ornithologist,—J. H. Gurney, jun. The House Sparrow, by a Friend of the Farmers,—Colonel C. Russell. The House Sparrow in Yarrell's British Birds. The Sparrow in our Bill of Fare. The English Sparrow in America, by Dr. Elliott Coues. A Ruffian in Feathers, by Olive Thorne Miller.

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